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SUBJECT: MALTA'S ENGAGEMENT ON WOMEN'S ISSUES

REF: STATE 09 STATE 124579

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¶1. (SUMMARY) Maltese women are under-represented at the decision making level of most of Malta's government and business organizations. From a total of 69 representatives in Parliament, only six are female. Out of nine Ministers, only one is female. Malta's female workforce has increased over the last two decades, however female participation in Malta's workforce remains low in comparison to other EU member states - only 38.5%. The Lisbon Treaty target set for Malta is sixty percent, meaning that Malta has to increase the female workforce by roughly twenty-two percent in order to meet the EU targets. The Government of Malta is making efforts to facilitate the increased participation of women in the work-force, such as encouraging day-care centers for young children and parental leave, but Malta still lags well behind other EU states.

¶2. At the Bureau's request, post provides the following information:

¶3. Details on current women's issues programs which highlight Post's work with civil society, NGOs, local governments, international or regional organizations, and other relevant interlocutors:

Current embassy programs that address women's issues have focused on TIP and economic empowerment. Malta has been ranked as a Tier II Country in the Department's Trafficking in Person's Report. The Embassy is working privately with the Government of Malta (GOM) to increase the processing speed of these TIP prosecution, while Public Diplomacy (PD) is using exchange programs to increase awareness within the judiciary. PD has created a Single Country IV program on judicial reform that will focus on the timely administration of cases and trafficking issues. With Embassy support, the University of Malta has requested a Fulbright Specialist come to the law school to work on constitutional law issues including reforming the trial system.

In Malta, growing attention is being given to the problem of domestic violence. Post political officer has met with several voluntary organizations which provide support to victims of domestic violence and trafficking in persons, as well as with the government agency (Appogg) which supports victims through the Ministry for Social Policy. In November, post placed the Washington generated Op-Ed Commemorating 16 Days Against Gender Based Violence, in the local press and highlighted local organizations working on the issue on the Embassy web page. Post senior leadership has also discussed the issue of domestic violence with senior Maltese Catholic Church officials.

¶4. Best practices on these issues, identified through both current and past programs:

Embassy Malta's efforts have employed exchanges, small grants, and outreach. Recent IV programs have included women's empowerment topics such as FY09's "Business Development Issues for Women

Business Leaders." Currently, a female Maltese journalist is studying at the University of Maryland as a Humphrey Fellow with the expectation that she will become one of the few senior female journalists in Malta. Post provided a series of small grants in 2007 to the Malta Women in Business Association to organize conferences and speakers on issues related to women in business. Post gives an annual "Women of Achievement" award during a reception at the Ambassador's residence which helps post highlight women's issues.

15. Illustrative examples of success stories, from current and past initiatives that have focused on women's issues:

In 2007, the U.S. Embassy assisted the Malta Women in Business Association to organize a series of conferences in which established business leaders and students had the opportunity to discuss the importance of female entrepreneurship, how business ethics can address community concerns and best practices to achieve a work-life balance. With post sponsorship, members of the organization SIPE - Students in Private Enterprise - were able to participate in the seminars. The goal of this initiative was to bring together successful female business leaders with the next generation of female entrepreneurs and to highlight two important principles of responsible entrepreneurship: addressing social issues and protecting our environment. Following the conference, the youths expressed appreciation for the opportunity to learn from the experience of female pioneers in the entrepreneurial sector in Malta. They were positively influenced by the environmental theme of the conference and completed a project to demonstrate how small businesses can safeguard the environment. The students also participated in a number of initiatives to promote Corporate Social Responsibility by volunteering to assist local orphanages.

16. Opportunities where there is potential for increasing cooperation between the United States and local governments and/or

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civil society groups on these issues:

Increased cooperation is possible in a variety of areas with increased opportunities to provide exchanges and training. Exchanges focused on encouraging women in business, law and government and discouraging the incidents of domestic violence and the trafficking in persons would be helpful. Training of police, prosecutors, legislators and judges on measures required to increase the effectiveness and speed of the judicial process would improve Malta's ability to prosecute trafficking cases.

17. Identify areas where additional U.S. action and/or cooperation on women's issues could be useful:

Although women are now the majority of higher education graduates (1620 female, 1114 male in 2009) and have an increasing presence in the workforce (38.5%, a 2.3% increase from 2007 to 2008), they are underrepresented in management and their earnings are less than those of their male counterparts. The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu>) reported in January 2009 that the pay gap was 23.25 percent. To encourage female employment, the GOM introduced a tax refund incentive for those women who chose to return to work. From 2006-to date, 3,652 women opted to take part in the program. Speaker programs and/or IVLPs could be used to educate government/NGO/citizenry on ways of facilitating initial access or return to the workforce for those women desiring to do so.

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